



Abercorn School Complaints Policy for Parents

Abercorn School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be dealt with by the school in accordance with this procedure.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution:

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should contact their son/daughter's form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the head of the pre-prep/head of the middle school/deputy head as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of the Pre-Prep/Head of the Preparatory School High Mistress will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the 'line manager' concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the 'line manager' will attempt to resolve the matter in five working days or as soon as is practicable.
- Should a matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution:

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the High Mistress, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.
- In most cases, the High Mistress will speak to the parents concerned within 2 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the High Mistress to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in seven working days or as soon as is practicable.
- The High Mistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the High Mistress is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The High Mistress will give reasons for the decision.
- The written decision will be issued within fourteen working days of receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the High Mistress will write to the parents within the fourteen working day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why she is unable to issue her decision and informing the parents when she will do so, which will be within twenty eight working days of receipt of the complaint in any event.

- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to involve Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the head informing him/her of their decision to do so within 28 working days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a named director. The named director will then take responsibility for the organisation of a complaints panel hearing.
- The panel will consist of at least three persons, at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
- Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the board of directors.
- The named director, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen working days.
- If the named director and/or the members of the panel deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within five working days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it will not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within fourteen working days of the first hearing wherever possible but within twenty-eight working days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of their decision together with their reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.
- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the High Mistress, directors and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) j of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Footnotes to Complaints Procedure:

1. In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.
2. In the event of a panel hearing, the teacher will have the right to make representations to the panel.
3. The director with responsibility for Child Protection procedures, will, as a matter of course, produce an annual report on the school's effectiveness and compliance with child protection issues and such issues will be an item on the agenda of all formal directors' meetings.

Signed: Senior Leadership Team

Date: April 2009